

Fatalities on State Highway System Still Dropping

One traffic-related fatality is too many. That's why agencies and organizations across the nation are working to increase safety awareness for all travelers — whether they're drivers, cyclists or pedestrians. These efforts to educate the public are paying off. Traffic deaths have dropped significantly over time.



In this video, the "See and Be Seen" campaign gives safety reminders to drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians. To view the video, visit www.dot.ca.gov/ctjournal/MileMarker/index.html.

The California Highway Patrol reports that in 2012, California had the lowest number of fatal collisions since 1945. Fatal accidents on the state highway system in 2012 were 0.61 for every 100 million vehicles miles traveled which is below the state goal of 1.0.

Regular Reminders for Drivers

Caltrans, in coordination with the California Highway Patrol and the California Office of Traffic Safety, often uses highway message signs to remind drivers what to do in a crash, warn against drunk and distracted driving, and give alerts about highway work zones.



Highway Work: A Dangerous Job

Highway construction and maintenance are among the most dangerous jobs in California. Since the 1920s, 183 Caltrans employees have been killed on the job. On average, 1,000 Caltrans vehicles are struck each year — almost three each day.

Over the years, Caltrans' various public campaigns have helped reduce the number of traffic-related deaths to both highway workers and the traveling public. Following the success of California's "Slow for the Cone Zone" public awareness campaign, Caltrans, in partnership with the California Office of Traffic Safety and California Highway Patrol, began asking drivers to "Be Work Zone Alert" and help save lives on California's roads.

The "Be Work Zone Alert" campaign seeks to make an emotional connection with motorists by reminding them that highway workers are much more than a blur on the roadside. They are mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers — they are people whose lives matter. The campaign features the real children of real Caltrans workers. Their message is simple: they want their parents to come home at the end of the work day. The campaign includes public service announcements and nearly 60 billboards across California. This effort is funded with highway maintenance funds and a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Protecting all Highway Travelers

Highway workers, of course, are not the only ones who face risks on our highways. Caltrans strives

to ensure the safety of everyone traveling on the highway system, whether they're in a truck, a car, or, with increasing frequency, on a bicycle or on foot. The 2010–12 California Household Travel Survey showed that more than twice as many people chose to walk and bike to their destinations than during the previous decade, jumping from 11 percent in the 2000 survey to nearly 23 percent in the 2010–12 survey.

Overall, fatal accidents on the state highway system have dropped about 43 percent during the 10-year period of 2003 to 2012, from 1.08 to 0.61 for every 100 million vehicle miles traveled. Fatal accidents involving pedestrians and bicyclists, however, have increased. In 2003, pedestrian and cyclists made up 14.26 percent of fatal accidents and that number gradually climbed to 19.76 percent in 2012. We are seeing a dramatic shift in the way people choose to travel, and in response we are working to make sure that the highway system is safe for all travelers.

One way we deliver the message of highway safety is the "See and Be Seen" campaign, which features TV, radio, and print outreach. It is aimed at travelers along State Route 273. The route begins just south of the city of Anderson in Shasta County and runs parallel to Interstate 5 to the city of Redding. It borders many agricultural fields in Anderson, a large casino in Redding, and runs past Shasta County's only homeless shelter. In the last five years, State Route 273 has seen 15 pedestrian or bicycle-related collisions. Three were fatal.

With our traffic safety partners, we are continuing our work toward zero traffic-related deaths on California's highways so we can create a system that integrates safety and sustainability for all travelers.

Source: Caltrans District 2 and the Division of Research, Innovation, and System Information

The "Be Work Zone Alert" public service announcement features the children of Caltrans employees. The children ask that drivers help make sure their parents come home safely at the end of the workday. You can view the video at www.dot.ca.gov/ctjournal/MileMarker/index.html.

